

**PARKS AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Parks and Cultural Affairs Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on Wednesday, **March 9, 2005**.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. Jay H. Schneiderman, Chairman
Leg. Lynne C. Nowick, Vice•Chairman
Leg. Cameron Alden
Leg. Angie Carpenter
Leg. Jon Cooper
Leg. William J. Lindsay

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Mea Knapp, Counsel to the Legislature
Alexandra Sullivan, Chief Deputy Clerk
Thomas J. Hroncich, Parks Department
Charles Bender, Aide to PO's Office
Ben Zwirn, Assistant Deputy County Executive
Frank Tassone, Aide to Majority Leader
Amy Duryea, Aide to Leg. Schneiderman
Eric Brown, Aide to Leg. Schneiderman
Greg Moran, Aide to PO's Office
Sean Clancy, Budget Review Office
Maria Figalora

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Kraus, Court Stenographer

(THE MEETING CONVENED AT 11:00 AM)

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I'd like to call the meeting of the Parks and Cultural Affairs Committee to order. If you all will rise and join us for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Lindsay.

(SALUTATION)

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

All right. I expect a fairly brief meeting today. Thank you for all for coming out in inclement weather. I'd like •• I have one yellow card, but it's also an individual who is on our agenda, Maria Figalora, who is up for potential appointment to the Vanderbilt Museum Commission. And what I'd like to do is start out right there. Ms. Figalora, is it?

MS. FIGALORA:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Yes. Okay. Is before us at the table. And if you could just introduce yourself, tell us why you're interested in serving. And I'm sure that the Committee will have some questions for you.

MS. FIGALORA:

Certainly. Thank you. My name is Maria Figalora. I'm a little nervous to be here, but at the same time very excited. I'm happy to see a few familiar faces.

First, let me begin by thanking everyone for giving me a ••

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Don't be nervous.

MS. FIGALORA:

•• the opportunity.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

We're an easy committee.

MS. FIGALORA:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

You're among friends.

MS. FIGALORA:

If selected to serve on the board, would be a wonderful and unique experience. Having said that, let me just say that I've been interested in history •• I've always been interested in history, education, different cultures. Certainly the Vanderbilt Museum is drenched in so much of that between the mansion, the planetarium, the museum exhibits, educational programs, special events, it would be a unique experience for me. I can tell you that some of my experiences have been with past member of Head Start, who's mission has been to provide comprehensive learning experience to children and at the same time helping their parents. The past seven years I've been •• I have volunteered my time to the Elizabeth T. McNamee Fund. This fund supports many community and scholarship programs.

I've worked as a volunteer for Pronto, distributing food and clothing, filling out translating papers for needy families. And also worked with a lot of the residents at the Medford Multi•care Nursing Home doing if fundraisers, cooking ethnic dishes that the residents enjoy. And done a lot of things there to try and facilitate their lives. Basically that's some of the things that I've done.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay. Questions for Ms. Figalora starting with Legislator Alden.

LEG. ALDEN:

Hi. Thanks for coming down.

MS. FIGALORA:

Thank you.

LEG. ALDEN:

Do you have the time to spend on this?

MS. FIGALORA:

Yes, I do. I feel that I would be very dedicated and would spend as much time as necessary doing it.

LEG. ALDEN:

Very good. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Legislator Carpenter.

LEG. CARPENTER:

I really have no questions. I would have asked that same question that Legislator Alden did because I think it's important that when we do have nominees that we, you know, clear the air upfront right away and make sure that they are willing to make that commitment to go to meetings and be involved in sub•committees. And I did ask all of this of Miss Figalora before I put the resolution in. So, I personally want to thank you for being so excited and enthused about it because I think that certainly that is a very big asset to being on a board if you really can believe in the mission of the institution and throw yourself into it as I've seen you do in many things in the community. It really will be an asset to the Vanderbilt Museum. I want to thank you.

LEG. ALDEN:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Hold on. We still have another Legislator who wants to speak.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Don't forget me.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I haven't. Right. And before I turn things over to Mr. Lindsay, I just want to ask for the record of Counsel if based on the testimony we've heard from Miss Figalora she meets •• her background meets the minimum qualifications that are outlined in the County Charter for this position.

MS. KNAPP:

I'm sorry, I was out of the room for just a few minutes. I'm not sure that I heard all of your testimony.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Do you have a copy of the resume?

MS. KNAPP:

I do have a copy of the resume now. There is a question in terms of the •• code does require some experience with either museums or educational. And I'm not sure that you spoke to that.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Actually, if I could answer, Miss Figalora did talk about the time that she spent as a member of the board of Head Start in working in that educational capacity as a member of that educational institution albeit young students but also working with their parents. So, I think, that would answer that question.

LEG. ALDEN:

We want young students coming to the facility.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Is it educational or museum, Counsel or •• could you read that line in the statute? But I thought one of the criteria •• this was an and/or •• was volunteerism within the community. And she spoke quite a bit •• she spoke quite a bit to that. You need to see if it's an and/or a must.

MS. KNAPP:

It talks about relevant, previous personal commitment to public education or expertise in a subject matter area reflected in the collection strength of the Vanderbilt Museum including but not limited to history, natural history •• I believe you did speak about history.

MS. FIGALORA:

Yes.

MS. KNAPP:

History, natural history with particular emphasis on those areas directly affecting the collection of the museum and/or the historic and natural resources of Suffolk County Historic Trust and/or the Suffolk County Nature Preserve Trust.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

And just once again, you spoke quite a bit about volunteerism within the community. In what capacity did you volunteer again?

MS. FIGALORA:

With which one?

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Just a couple. Give me ••

MS. FIGALORA:

The Elizabeth T. McNamee Fund.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

What is that?

MS. FIGALORA:

It's •• they response scholarship programs.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay.

MS. FIGALORA:

Pronto, also. Pronto distributes •• that's in Brentwood. They distribute clothing and food. Their food pantry.

LEG. CARPENTER:

If I could just interrupt. Maria's being a little modest. Pronto, too, basically services Hispanic community. And Maria has spent many years volunteering with Pronto doing translations for them.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Cultural affairs.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Cultural affairs.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Please don't get me I'm wrong. I'm not looking for ways to disqualify you. I'm looking for ways to qualify you.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Okay. No, I think •• let's keep in mind this is a volunteer position.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I just want to make sure it meets the County Charter. And I think clearly it does.

LEG. ALDEN:

I used to work for in a part of Brentwood. And Pronto's very involved up there. A lot of educational programs go through Pronto, which people don't realize. That in itself might qualify

her on the educational part.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay. Legislator Lindsay. You're up. I didn't forget about you.

LEG. LINDSAY:

The sole democrat over here on the right. You forget about me.

LEG. ALDEN:

If you're looking at the horseshoe, you're on the left.

LEG. LINDSAY:

But where I am, I'm on the right.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

It's all about perspective.

LEG. LINDSAY:

If I may, may I call you Maria?

MS. FIGALORA:

Absolutely.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Okay. Thank you. I certainly do not have a problem with your nomination. And I applaud you for your willingness to step forward and to serve in a non•paid position. Because the Vanderbilt is our one museum. And it's a very valuable asset to the County. And the County spends a lot of money over there. So, the only thing that I would like to say to you, because I'm assuming that you're nomination will be approved by this Committee today and by the entire Legislature on Tuesday, is that when we get there, you are our eyes and ears. Do not, do not be afraid to speak up if you don't understand something or if you think something is wrong as a trustee. That's your obligation. That's the obligation that we're bestowing upon you. All over Long Island today, you know, if you just look at our school districts, we have a lot of people serve on

school boards that do not get paid, but they have an awesome responsibility of keeping track of the responsibilities that's been bestowed on them. And you can see what happens by the example of some of the school districts that have went awry when people do not, you know, step up to the plate and say, what's going on here? And if you could •• when you get there, if you could just keep that in mind; that you're our eyes and ears. And we're really depending on you to ask the questions to make sure everything •• all the right decisions are being made over in the management of the Vanderbilt.

MS. FIGALORA:

I can assure that you that I will not take my responsibility lightly. And I will do everything that I can to make sure that I am your eyes and ears and do everything that's humanly possible.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Thank you.

LEG. CARPENTER:

If I could just say one more thing, Mr. Chairman. I really appreciate, Bill, that you raised that. Sometimes we forget that. You know, people get appointed to the museum board, they go off, they go to meetings. And we never hear or see of them again until they're coming back to be reappointed. Issues will come up. The fact that Legislators are sponsoring the trustees, it's just meant that you are supposed to keep that line of communication coming, you know, both ways. So, I'm really glad that you raised that. Thank you.

I would like to make a motion to address this. You don't have to take it out of order, but that while Maria is here, if we could address the resolution, I'd like to make a motion to approve.

LEG. ALDEN:

Second. And there's a reason why it's a leadership position.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

There's a second. I appreciated Mr. Lindsay's comments. They're astute. Okay. We had a motion by Legislator Carpenter, second by Legislator Alden. All in favor? Any opposed? Passed and carried. Congratulations. **(Vote: 6•0)**

MS. FIGALORA:

Thank you so much.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

You still, of course, be •• you don't need to personally be before the Legislature, but this resolution will be in front of the Legislature next week. There's no need for you to reappear. That's just a final step to the confirmation.

MS. FIGALORA:

Thank you.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

So, we'll jump into the agenda here. That was resolution 2323. Moving onto Resolution 2342 of '04 ••

LEG. COOPER:

Excuse me, Mr. Chair, I'd like to add my name to the majority in that last resolution.

LEG. ALDEN:

I think you were counted as being present. You were standing right there.

LEG. COOPER:

Oh, good. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

On the last one. On 2323.

LEG. ALDEN:

He was standing right there.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

2342. This is a tabled resolution amending the adopted 2005 Operating Budget to

transfer funds from Fund 477 Water Quality Protection, amending the 2005 Capital Budget and appropriating funds in connection with parking lot improvements at Meschutt County Park. It's really poorly stated on here. These are drainage quality improvements. And there are some alterations to the parking lot to receive the drainage structures that are going within the parking lot. But it's not •• all the improvements are directly related to the drainage, which is attempting to get road run•off out of the Harbor there. So, it's •• this has been through the Committee now, the Water Quality •• is that the Committee?

LEG. LINDSAY:

It passed that?

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

It did pass. It has been recommended under the Peconic Estuary Program. So, it meets all their requirements.

LEG. LINDSAY:

I'll make a motion.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

There's a motion. I'll second for discussion. Cameron? Legislator Alden.

LEG. ALDEN:

I'm just going to make a quick statement about this. There might be portions of this project that would, you know, more than 100% qualify for what the 477 account really stands for. But for the most part paving of a parking lot •• and that's what a lot of the money here is doing •• it's going to repave this parking lot. And I really find that almost insulting to the initial intent of the 477 account. So, whatever the Committee wants to do with this, if they want to push this forward. But this is something that, you know, we're going to use money for a parking lot that had to be rebuilt any way and should have come out of the proper capital accounts rather than 477 account. And I'm just going to point out, also, to the Committee that it's not an unlimited amount of money in the 477 account. If we take all the resolutions that are before us, basically the 477 account, we don't have any more money to do capital projects this year. And we probably won't have any more money to do any in the future because a lot of the money now is being diverted 477 for payroll issues and payroll use. So, I would just worry about us passing a

large capital project like this when I know in all of our districts there's going to be, you know, a couple of places where somebody's going to want •• a Legislator's going to want to remediate run•off from a road into a stream, into a lake, into somebody yard or whatever. They're going to want to do a remediation project. Instead of something like this that really should have been on our capital project watch list any way to redo this type of a beach parking lot. So, I'm just •

- I'm disappointed that we're doing this type of project out of the 477 account.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

On the motion, I don't believe that's a fair representation of what this project is. Only a small portion of it has to do with the parking lot itself. Because there are strong drainage basins since going in, there has to be some alterations to the parking lot. And these •• this construction is in relationship to that. This is not just simply repaving a parking lot. That's not fair ••

LEG. ALDEN:

The testimony we heard, unfortunately at a prior meeting was that most of the money on this project is to repave a parking lot that had broken up over the years. So, it's not me that has misinterpreted or misrepresented. It was the testimony we heard in the past.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

There is an individual here from the Parks Department. Tom Hroncich. Tom, are you familiar with this project.

MR. HRONCICH:

I'm probably not. I'm probably not as well prepared to speak on this as I should. If you'd like, Commission Foley is back in his office right now. He was unable to attend this meeting because of an emergency at Smith Point, which I mentioned to Legislator Schneiderman earlier. But if you'd like, if you want to pass on this for now, I can give him a call and address any questions you have.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Yeah. All right I'll support the tabling, then, since we can't •• I think it's important that the

board has accurate information about the details of the project. I don't think any of us want to see the 477 fund spent inappropriately.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I have spoken with the Park Commissioner about this project. And I feel fairly confident there that this is an appropriate expenditure. But I think that all my colleagues deserve that same presentation. So, I'll support the motion to table. Legislator Lindsay.

LEG. LINDSAY:

But just on the issue, and I know when this initially came up, there was questions, and I'm certainly not an expert on this particular project, but I think everybody kind of agreed that this water quality review board should go through these various resolutions and separate them for our edification, what's directly connected to water quality and not. So, I'm depending a lot on what they say. If they say the resolution does •• is directly connected to water quality, that's fine by me. If you want to table it and get more information, I don't object to that. But I really think that we should look to that board as a source of going into the particulars of an individual project.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

If we could have Mr. Hroncich convey the message to Commissioner Foley to be here at the next meeting and maybe give us a detailed •• give us the specs on this project, maybe some engineering drawings showing exactly what's going on so we can allay some of the concerns that the Committee has.

LEG. ALDEN:

Mr. Chairman. Also, if we could ask for that type of detailed information, why the 477 account was chosen rather than a capital account. And why some of those improvements, which are just modest drainage that normally should have been made, why they weren't included in our capital plan.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Again, I mean I think this is an important project. I'd like to see it happen however it gets

funded. I don't want to see it fall into the chasm of bureaucracy.

LEG. ALDEN:

Well, also right now, if we did this today, I'm not so sure it could be done for the five or six or eight months even. So, that would be another thing that we would like to hear a timetable on. Because you have to bid all these things out and plan them.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

There's a motion and a second to table for one cycle. All in favor? Any opposed? **So tabled.**
(Vote: 6•0)

1107, authorizing use of Indian Island County Parks by Gift of Life, Incorporated.

LEG. NOWICK:

Motion.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Motion by Legislator Nowick, second by Legislator Lindsay. All in favor? Any Opposed?
Resolution approved. (Vote: 6•0)

1132, authorizing the use of Smith Point County Park property in 2005 William Floyd Community Summit for a 5 K race.

LEG. COOPER:

Motion.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Motion by Legislator Cooper, second by Legislator Nowick. All in favor? Any opposed? Abstentions? **Resolution approved. (Vote: 6•0)**

1142, authorizing use of Blydenburgh•Weld House at Blydenburgh County Park by Suffolk County Archeological Association. Is there a motion?

LEG. COOPER:

Motion.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Motion by Legislator Cooper.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Second.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I'm sorry. I'm hearing that this needs to be tabled. Why? Do we know? All right. I'm being informed that the entity •• the Suffolk County Archeological Association asking for this to be tabled one cycle.

LEG. ALDEN:

Motion to reconsider.

LEG. COOPER:

Second.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I don't think you have to reconsider. We have to finish the vote. So, there's a motion •• I'll make a motion to table.

LEG. COOPER:

I'll second.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Mr. Hroncich. I'm having trouble with that last name. It's that H•R at the beginning of it that I find challenging.

MR. HRONCICH:

Yes. Actually there was a speaker at the previous committee with an H•R. I almost ran out to talk to him.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

The H stands alone. Hroncich.

MR. HRONCICH:

Yeah. This I am more equipped to speak on. I actually drafted the resolution for our department. This is actually just memorializing an arrangement that has already been in place for a number of years. This organization has been in this building without a contract for as long as anybody can remember. And this is really just a way of having a contract with the organization to formalize the arrangement.

LEG. ALDEN:

Why would the organization ask to have it tabled?

MR. HRONCICH:

That's the first I'm hearing of that.

LEG. ALDEN:

Also, while you're up there, what happened to Smith Point?

MR. HRONCICH:

I gave Legislator Schneiderman a couple of aerial photos of some storm damage from •• since January. There's actually a potential breach of the beach in Legislator O'Leary's office.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Right. I have those ••

MR. HRONCICH:

•• Legislator O'Leary's district. And this morning the Commissioner met with DPW on site to determine how to go about addressing it. After I spoke with Legislator Schneiderman, I called the Commissioner to ask. And the permit that he's going to put in for is going to request that scraping from an adjacent beach be done and the sand be shifted. And it's not in any of your districts where the sand is coming from.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I'm sorry. What I'm hearing on why this should be tabled on 1142, going back to 1142 ••

MR. HRONCICH:

Sure.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

•• is that the Suffolk County Archeological Association is still working on details with the Parks Department as to what will be within their responsibilities financially within this use of the building. So, I think this needs more time to sort that out.

LEG. ALDEN:

We tabled it; right?

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

So, there's a motion to table and a second. All in favor of tabling? Any opposed? **The resolution tabled. (Vote: 6•0)** Legislator Alden, did you have questions related to the Smith Point potential breach?

LEG. ALDEN:

One more question on this. Is this in the area of the TWA Memorial or is down a little bit further east of it?

MR. HRONCICH:

It's further to the east.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay. So, how is the memorial fairing with the storms?

MR. HRONCICH:

It has not been brought to my attention that it's been jeopardized by any these particular storms.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay. I think it was two years ago or three years ago, we did a remediation project because

actually the whole concession stand, that whole building and the cesspool field that was out in front of it, that was being undermined by storms. How are they standing up, if you know?

MR. HRONCICH:

I believe that that money was approved and has been implemented. There's actually •• Legislator O'Leary has something that was laid on the table last month for \$70,000 for the memorial that, I think, was at Budget and Finance yesterday.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Nothing to do with erosion.

LEG. ALDEN:

No, I know. But the erosion problems, are they heading for the concession stand again? Or that ••

MR. HRONCICH:

Not to my knowledge. If you would like, I'll look into it and get back to you.

LEG. ALDEN:

Right.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Thank you, Mr. Hroncich. One more question.

LEG. NOWICK:

One question that has nothing to do with this. I'm just curious. Does the County have athletic fields or any new athletic fields that they're building? Do we have athletic buildings in the County for use?

MR. HRONCICH:

Yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

Soccer or ••

MR. HRONCICH:

The Greenways Program, for instance? Is that what you're referring to?

LEG. NOWICK:

Yes, any athletic fields that are available.

MR. HRONCICH:

That are available for development now?

LEG. NOWICK:

Yes.

MR. HRONCICH:

I'm not aware of any, but I can look into that.

LEG. NOWICK:

Yeah, I was just curious about County athletic fields or if we're building any athletic fields? One of my constituents had asked me about it. If you could just get that information to my office; or just a list of everything we have and if we're building any.

MR. HRONCICH:

Okay.

LEG. NOWICK:

Thank you.

MR. HRONCICH:

Sure.

LEG. LINDSAY:

We should be building more.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Motion to adjourn. Second. All in favor? We're adjourned. Thank you.

(THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 12:00 PM)

DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY